

Tom Horne  
Superintendent

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## ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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### STATE SUPERINTENDENT TOM HORNE ISSUES REPORT DETAILING FAILURES AT ROOSEVELT SCHOOL DISTRICT; CALLS FOR LEGISLATION TO FACILITATE DISTRICT TAKEOVER

PHOENIX (Friday, January 18, 2008) - State Superintendent Tom Horne today issued a report detailing continued failures, over a number of years, at the Roosevelt School District (RSD), and calling for legislation to facilitate state takeover of failing districts. Horne noted that the district, with supplemental state and federal funds, receives about \$8,000 per student, 33% higher than the state average of about \$6,000 per student. Yet, this year, it has seven Underperforming and four Failing schools.

Horne's report states, in part:

"Political ties among Board members and mid-level management, including principals, leave the Superintendent unable to discipline or provide leadership. The result is a pilotless airplane filled with children, flying in the dark and surrounded by mountains.

Lack of leadership at the top produces poor leadership at all levels, which results in poor performance by the District.

At both the school and district level, many Roosevelt administrative personnel are inexperienced in their positions and have minimal depth of knowledge or ability to describe the purpose of an instructional strategy, resource or assessment, and how they will ultimately affect student achievement. A district focus group indicated there is widespread apathy among the administrators and a lack of and need for strong instructional leadership at many of the schools and the district level.

The RSD Governing Board is a consistent topic of conversation from all stakeholder interviews and focus groups at the district and school levels. The overwhelming consensus is that the board's harmful interference in district operations is the number one reason nothing gets done or done well in the district. District staff, community members and parents say that the board's decisions are based on race, personal favors or vendettas and that many district staff are afraid of the board's retaliation. The negativity and personal attacks have caused the district irreparable harm and it will be a long time before it can recover.

All stakeholders shared that drastic action must be taken including removal of the Board's authority, so the district would have a true opportunity to improve."

The report gives a number of examples to substantiate these conclusions.

For two years in a row, a bill to authorize State Board of Education takeover of academically dysfunctional school districts passed the House but failed in the Senate on party line votes, with Republicans in support and Democrats in opposition. Now, with continued news of dysfunction in the Roosevelt District (a large district with 21 schools), the push for the state to authorize takeover has become bipartisan. The bill to authorize takeover will be co-sponsored this year by the three legislative representatives, all Democrats, of the Roosevelt District (Senator Leah Landrum-Taylor, Representative Ben Miranda, and Representative Clovis Campbell, Jr.)

A copy of the report is attached.